

Statement by Glenn Seidel

Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Research, & Rural Development

Harrisburg, PA

May 1, 2006

Good morning,

My name is Glenn Seidel. My wife Jane and I own and operate a 118-acre farm along the Tulpehocken Creek in Heidelberg Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania. We live there with my mother Grace.

Committee members already know the farm bill and what's wrong and right concerning agriculture. I could give you statistics from now until the cows come home, which if milked twice a day, is about ten hours. But I will be brief and discuss only two of my concerns.

First is farmland preservation, particularly in the Northeast United States. Unless something is done, and done soon, a lot of our prime farmland will be lost. We talk about national security. We toss term security around in a cavalier way. But I'm here to tell you that the preservation of prime agricultural land is right now an urgent national security issue.

The following is a list of issues and reasons why we need agricultural land preservation:

- 1) Food production, so we can eat
- 2) Biomass, for fuel
- 3) Carbon sequestration, to combat global warming
- 4) Water quality and quantity, so we can drink and industry can thrive

- 5) Nutrient reutilization/pollution control/recycling, since our agricultural lands provide a natural recycling medium for all kinds of organic materials including our own biosolids.
- 6) Oxygen regeneration, so we can breathe
- 7) Commerce, so we have commodity products to pay our trade imbalance
- 8) Risk management, in the event of a natural or manmade catastrophe, productive agricultural land disbursed throughout the country only makes good sense.
- 9) Fiber, for cloths
- 10) Open space to promote aesthetics, culture and sanity

My second concern for Congress to address is conservation and the technical assistance to promote those conservation practices. In the list mentioned above for agricultural land preservation, every item requires conservation planning and the technical assistance to conduct that planning. As increased demands are placed on every acre of land, the need for conservation and technical assistance only increases. Conservation is not a one-time capital occurrence. It is an annual necessity. As agriculture becomes more intense, the need for best management practices to be implemented for soil, nutrient, air-quality, and water resource management only become more demanding. Our current programs must not only continue, but must also expand. Congress should ensure that best management practice strategies are developed and that these strategies are properly funded and deployed.

Our government farm agencies should review conservation plans and assist conservation plan implementation. Also governmental agencies function as a historical repository of information concerning the implemented conservation practices on agricultural land. Without NRCS, FSA and Conservation Districts, continuity would be lost as our farmland pass from one generation to another or from one landowner to another.

In summarizing:

- 1) Congress needs to urgently promote prime agricultural land preservation
- 2) Congress needs to continue and to increase funding not only for conservation practices, but also for the technical assistance to implement these practices.

Thank you,

Glenn R. Seidel